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February 26 - March 4 is Eating Disorders Awareness Week

It's time to talk about it! According to the National Eating Disorder Association, eating disorders such as bulimia, binge eating disorder, and anorexia are serious illnesses that involve extreme emotions, attitudes, and behaviors surrounding food, exercise, and body image. Contrary to common stereotypes, eating disorders affect all kinds of people, regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status, sexuality, or background. In fact, 30 million Americans will struggle with an eating disorder at some point in their lives.

But despite the staggering number of people affected and the reality that they have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness, eating disorders often live in the shadows and most people don't get the help they deserve.



The most important thing anyone can do for a person with an eating disorder is to encourage treatment.

The following may be signs of eating disorders:

- ☐ Preoccupation with body or weight
- ☐ Obsession with calories, food, or nutrition
- ☐ Constant dieting, even when thin
- ☐ Rapid, unexplained weight loss or weight gain
- ☐ Taking laxatives, diet pills or compulsive exercising
- ☐ Making excuses to get out of eating
- ☐ Avoiding social situations that involve food
- ☐ Going to the bathroom right after meals to purge
- ☐ Eating alone, at night, or in secret
- ☐ Hoarding high-calorie food

If you have concerns that you or a family member may be suffering with an eating disorder, encourage them to take or share NEDA'S online screening tool: <http://nationaleatingdisorders.org/screening>.

For information and resources visit: www.nationaleatingdisorders.org

Contact Helpline: 800-931-2237 OR visit www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/helplinechat

For information about the Suffolk County's in-service programs on eating disorders for school personnel, call 853-3162.

10 Steps to Positive Body Image

Introduce yourself to healthier ways of looking at yourself and your body. The more you practice these new thought patterns, the better you will feel about who you are and the body you naturally have.

1. Appreciate all that your body can do. Celebrate running, dancing, breathing, laughing, dreaming, etc.
2. Keep a top-ten list of things you like about yourself that are not related to looks. Read your list often. Add to it.
3. Remind yourself that beauty is a state of mind, not a state of your body. When you feel good about who you are, you carry yourself with a sense of confidence, self-acceptance, and openness that makes you beautiful.
4. Look at yourself as a whole person and don't focus on body parts.
5. Surround yourself with people who are supportive.
6. Shut down those voices in your head that tell you your body is not "right" or that you are a "bad" person. Overpower negative thoughts with positive ones. Build yourself up with a few quick affirmations that work.
7. Wear clothes that are comfortable and that make you feel good. Work with your body, not against it.
8. Become a critical viewer of social and media messages. Pay attention to images, slogans, or attitudes that make you feel bad about yourself or your body. Protest these messages: write a letter to the advertiser or talk back to the image or message.
9. Do something nice for yourself--something that lets your body know you appreciate it. Take a bubble bath, make time for a nap, or find a peaceful place outside to relax.
10. Use the time and energy that you might have spent worrying about food, calories, and your weight to do something to help others. Reaching out to others can help you feel better about yourself and can make a positive change in our world.

#NEDAwareness